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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 593rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 13 January 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Sierra Leone (CRC/C/3/Add.43); (CRC/C/Q/SIE/1; written replies to the list of issues prepared by the Government of Sierra Leone (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Brima, Mr. Sesay, Mrs. Juxon-Smith and Mrs. Howard (Sierra Leone) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and had submitted reports on children's issues to the Security Council. He was confident that the Committee' s observations would be instrumental in enabling the authorities to provide a better life for the children of war-torn Sierra Leone, who had endured untold misery resulting from nine years of armed conflict and, especially, the invasion of Freetown a year before.

3. There had been a steady and encouraging improvement in the situation since the Government had submitted its written replies to the list of issues. With the signing of the 30 July 1999 Peace Agreement by President Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and the chief of the rebel Revolutionary United Front, a Government of National Unity, including representatives of the former belligerents, had been put in place, and the peace was monitored by United Nations peacekeepers. The improvement in the situation had prepared the ground for implementation of the Convention.

4. With the cessation or abatement of the systematic killing, abduction, amputation, rape and recruitment of child combatants, and with former faction leaders' promises to allow the Government and other agencies access to thousands of abducted children, interested parties could begin family tracing and reunification and more effectively implement the Convention.

5. Another positive outcome of the cessation of hostilities was the Government's ability to enhance its education and health action. In education, a start had been made on refurbishment or rebuilding of schools, to which educational materials had also been distributed. As new areas opened up, more children would be able to receive the free education introduced for classes 1 to 3.

6. There had also been accomplishments in health. There had been a 95 per cent success rate for the third round of national immunization days, celebrated in December 1999 with assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies and individuals. A further measure of the campaign's success was the support it had received from former rebel leaders. Hospitals and health centres continued to be refurbished, and drinking-water wells were being dug and chlorinated.

7. Great strides had been made in the HIV/AIDS prevention campaign, with young people being addressed on the subject of the epidemic at football matches and the distribution of free condoms to players and spectators alike. The National AIDS Control Programme would soon be conducting awareness activities in the provincial towns of Bo and Kenema.

8. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to ask questions on general measures of implementation, the definition of the child and general principles.

9. Mr. RABAH asked what steps were being taken to rebuild physical infrastructure, subject to the resources available. More importantly, what measures were in place to rebuild human beings? He recommended that the authorities should enact legislation to ensure harmonization of the country's extensive system of customary laws with the provisions of the Convention. Was there any provision for coordination between the Ministries of Social Welfare, Health and Education?

10. Mrs. EL GUINDI, observing that many children had been involved in the armed conflict, inquired about the exact minimum age for voluntary enlistment, and how the rights of children were protected in the enlistment process.

11. Mr. FULCI expressed awareness of the extreme difficulties facing the Government of Sierra Leone and dismay at the level of atrocities committed against children. The Convention required that, when families were unable to protect the best interests of their children, responsibility for doing so fell to the State. However, Sierra Leone appeared to have neither a reliable guiding policy governing displaced persons nor a coordinating body, a state of affairs which could only impede work in favour of children in camps. He recommended that such a policy should be formulated as a matter of urgency.

12. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether any legislative reforms had been undertaken, and what had been the fate of the draft Rights of the Child (Adoption of United Nations Convention, 1989) Act prepared by the Sierra Leone Bar Association. Countries confronting the serious challenges facing Sierra Leone were prone to adopt a needs-based approach. Was progress being made in the transition to a rights-based approach?

13. Was the National Programme of Action (NPA) established in 1992 currently being implemented? If not, what were the stumbling blocks? Strengthening of facilities had understandably been derailed by the war. She asked what structures or programmes existed for poverty alleviation, education and health, now that the hostilities had ceased, and what obstacles lay in their way.

14. Mr. DOEK asked how the Government was organizing coordination to ensure the implementation of the Convention. He requested further information concerning the precise role of the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights vis-à-vis the National Council for Children, the independent body established by UNICEF which seemed to enjoy wide powers of enactment and enforcement. As the Ombudsman's duties did not extend to children's issues, how was the implementation of the Convention monitored? Sierra Leone being a small county,

most operations were understandably centralized in the capital, Freetown. What plans were there for devolving some of those activities to the regions? With regard to birth registration, he asked what results had been obtained from the Government's encouragement of parents to register children within one month of birth.

15. Mrs. RILANTONO, pointing out that Sierra Leone was still beset by infectious diseases that led to child deaths, asked how the health system conducted its immunization campaigns, which were of crucial importance if children were to survive diseases such as tetanus, typhoid and diarrhoea.

16. She noted that programme activities for children depended on international funding. However, the written replies stated that many international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Sierra Leone failed to register with the Department of Development and Economic Planning (DODEP), in violation of the pertinent regulations. What were the Government's specific requirements in that regard? While NGOs should be encouraged, it was also necessary to ensure that they developed and implemented their programmes effectively.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 and resumed at 10.50.

17. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), replying to a question by Mr. Rabah, said that a Commission of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement had been established and was headed by a commissioner with cabinet rank. Although all ministries cooperated, it was the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender and Children's Affairs which was responsible for the rehabilitation of destroyed buildings, and, with assistance from UNICEF and the National Council for Children, for contacting children displaced by war in an attempt to reintegrate them into society. Children whose families could not be located were placed in institutions by that Ministry. Replying to Mrs. El Guindi, he said that 18 had been established as the new age for army recruitment.

18. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone) said that many children in Sierra Leone had been abducted or were internally displaced. The newly established National Child Protection Committee, made up of representatives of the Government and NGOs, of which she was a member, was doing its best to tackle that problem by visiting camps for internally displaced persons in order to register children, attempt to trace their families and arrange foster care or other special care where appropriate. A draft bill entitled "The Rights of the Child (Adoption of United Nations Convention, 1989) Act" had been tabled but was taking a long time to go through Parliament. Implementation of the Plan of Action had been delayed because of the war in the country. Nonetheless, continuous efforts were being made to implement some programmes on a small scale whenever peaceful conditions persisted for long enough. The current situation of relative peace had resulted in certain positive developments: some children who had been held by the rebels had been released, and efforts were being made to secure the release of all those still in captivity.

19. Regarding coordination mechanisms, the National Child Protection Committee included regional and district branches which conducted activities at grass-roots level. The regional officers reported to the Committee's national headquarters every month, enabling child-related activities to be coordinated at the national level. With UNICEF's assistance, a database had been set up containing information on the situation of children throughout the country, with the

exception of unsafe areas to which the Committee had no access. It hoped eventually to gain access to all areas of the country. The National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR) took part in monitoring the implementation of children's rights. The possibility of instituting an ombudsperson for the same purpose was mentioned in draft legislation, but had not yet been implemented because of the country's security situation.

20. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), responding to a question by Mr. Doek, said that registration of births was taken very seriously. There was a national office for the registration of births and deaths situation in Freetown, and a number of subregional offices located outside the capital. It had been decided that every child born must be registered and, in order to make that possible, registration forms had been distributed to the traditional birth attendants at village level and to child health workers and doctors. Chiefs had also been made aware of the need for registration. The country was still very far from a situation where the exact age of every child was known, and progress towards that end had been hampered by the war; however, efforts were being made to ensure that in future every birth was registered.

21. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone), replying to a question about planning and programming, said that the Department of Development and Economic Planning was responsible for registering NGOs and coordinating their activities. Some organizations were working without being registered, which was a problem that needed to be addressed. Coordinating activities was sometimes difficult if an organization ended up working in areas outside its original mandate and the Government had lacked the resources to monitor activities. However, policy was to be revised in order to deal with some of those concerns. Joint efforts were necessary to develop a coordinated approach to serving the interests of children.

22. Mrs. MOKHUANE, noting that the report stated that only 5 per cent of the national budget was allocated to child-related issues, asked whether that figure had changed since the completion of the report and, if not, how the proposed measures for implementing children's rights were to be achieved on such a limited budget. Substantial human resources were needed to implement the Convention, yet many professionals had left the country: how was that problem to be overcome within the available budget?

23. Regarding the definition of the child, the report gave no indication of the age of sexual consent or the minimum age for marriage, and there was therefore a discrepancy between customary law and the Convention. It had been said that information from relatives was used for assessing the age of the child; however, given the high illiteracy rate, how was it possible to be certain that the child's estimated age was correct? The high rate of malnutrition was likely to lead to many cases of stunted growth, which also made it more difficult to assess a child's age. The problem of determining a child's age was relevant to the age of criminal responsibility and the age of marriage.

24. The report had indicated areas of discrimination against the girl child. Early marriage and sex at an early age could be harmful to girls. She would like to know whether the Government intended to bring the minimum ages for marriage and sex into line with the Convention.

25. Mrs. EL GUINDI echoed Mrs. Mokhuane's concerns about discrimination against the girl child.

26. Mr. RABAH said that the age of criminal responsibility, 10 years, was very low. Corporal punishment of children, both in the family and in school, could cause physical and psychological harm. He would like to know whether the Government planned to enact any legislation to outlaw such punishment.

27. Mr. DOEK, referring to the written reply to question 19, asked for a specific example of a measure that had been taken to combat discrimination against the girl child and how effective it had been. He would appreciate further information about the current situation of disabled children in Sierra Leone. What progress had been made in implementing the policy of integrating disabled children into mainstream schools?

28. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), replying to Mrs. Mokhuane's question on budgetary resources, said that Sierra Leone was currently suffering extreme poverty because its natural resources of diamonds, gold, coffee and cocoa had for a long time been under rebel control. The country was therefore dependent on international assistance, for example from NGOs and United Nations agencies. He agreed that the figure of 5 per cent of the national budget allocated to children's issues was too low; however, the health budget had already been increased in the current year, and the Government intended to implement increases in other budget areas once the situation in the country had returned to normal.

29. It was true that some professionals had fled the country because of the war. However, as many others had stayed and substantial aid had also been received from international organizations, the situation was not as bad as might be supposed.

30. Although no minimum age for marriage was stipulated by law, a person still had to be considered "of age" in order to marry. As many people were illiterate, however, they relied on traditional ways of establishing a child's age, such as reference to events in the child's past. A sensitization campaign was under way to make traditional rulers aware of the need to ensure that children had come of age before marrying. In addition, a new education policy was in place, aimed at increasing school enrolment rates, particularly among girls. It was well known that education had the effect of delaying marriage because it raised children's aspirations in other areas of life. In the immediate term, efforts were being made to ensure that all births were registered so that there would eventually be a whole generation of children whose dates of birth were known, and it would therefore be possible to enact meaningful legislation on the age of marriage.

31. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone) said that children in her country did not suffer discrimination on any grounds, such as their place of birth or parents situation. Girls were being encouraged to go to school, whereas in the past they had been expected only to perform domestic chores. The Forum for African Women Educationalists was at the forefront of the campaign to raise awareness of the importance of sending girls to school. Girls who had been to school were used as role models to demonstrate to others what girls could achieve through education.

32. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) agreed that the age of criminal responsibility was too low and said that the issue would certainly be taken into consideration when future legislation was drafted. Corporal punishment was not widely applied nowadays; in schools, no teacher except the principal was allowed to mete out corporal punishment, and only female teachers were allowed to use it towards girls. In the home, it was no longer common practice, although two cases of cruelty to children had recently been brought before the courts.

33. There were many schools for the disabled in Sierra Leone, which were supported by the Government. Integrating the disabled into mainstream schools was a long-term aim, but was currently hampered by lack of resources.

34. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that, according to a United Nations document on adults and children abducted by opposition groups, 1,000 such persons had been released but more than 2,000 had still been missing in December 1999. She would appreciate up-to-date information on the situation.

35. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) said that a representative of the rebels had recently informed the President that all roads to rebel camps had been opened to allow access to children being held behind rebel lines. It was therefore hoped that those children would be released in the very near future.

36. Mrs. KARP expressed sympathy at Sierra Leone's plight. The very difficult situation could, however, act as a catalyst to promote the rights of children in a more effective manner. The most important principle contained in the new ideas reflected in the Convention was that of respect for children's views. The written replies referred to special occasions, such as the International Children's Day of Broadcasting, when children had been provided with an opportunity to express their opinions. However, article 12 of the Convention related primarily to everyday life and to the way in which those in authority who worked with children reflected children's views. The change in attitude manifested by the Government and different professionals created an opportunity to introduce the idea of respect for children's opinions into the new programmes and projects implemented. However, appropriate guidelines and training must be provided for those responsible for children so that children could themselves participate in the new structures established. It was necessary to ascertain whether such training and guidelines had been planned. If children were to become partners in the new programmes launched, they would be able to offer good advice and thereby make the programmes relevant to their needs.

37. With regard to the problem of early marriage, she was pleased to note that Sierra Leone was attempting to educate its people to change their customs. It was important to define the arrangement of such marriages as a criminal offence, as an appropriate definition would serve as a useful enforcement tool to prevent early marriage.

38. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that from the comments made it appeared that Sierra Leone received a considerable amount of funding from donor countries. However, donors frequently wanted their own programmes put in place, and such programmes might clash with those of the

receiving countries. Had Sierra Leone encountered that particular problem and, if so, how had it been overcome? The situation in the country had also required emergency planning. How had that planning been coordinated with long-term programmes and projects?

39. It was important to establish how the principle of child survival and development was coordinated with the eight major sections of the Convention. The efforts made by Sierra Leone to address the related problems of discrimination and disability had been noted. An attempt had been made to change the attitudes prevailing in society, and to move towards including disabled children in mainstream education. It had not been made clear, however, how the rights of such children under the Convention had been incorporated in plans for the future. Similarly, what had been done in society to make parents and ordinary citizens aware of the best interests of children? How had the efforts in question been manifested in children's everyday lives?

40. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), responding to a question raised by Mrs. Karp, said that in everyday life there was no visible refusal on the part of adults to listen to children. In schools there was free interaction between children and the school authorities, with children serving on different representative bodies. Within the home, children were able to talk freely to their parents on issues affecting their everyday lives. In a similar vein, at the national level, schools in Freetown had debated the appropriateness of the measures to be taken as a result of negotiations with the rebel forces.

41. With regard to legislation to combat early marriage, the suggestions made would be taken into account when the relevant bill was considered in Parliament. Difficulties were being encountered, however, in relation to children's ages, as birth registrations had not been common in the past.

42. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone) said that clashes with donors were at times inevitable. Efforts were made to reach a decision that served the interests of children, parents and communities. To that end, it was important to negotiate flexible and sustainable programmes together with the donors. It was hoped to make a gradual transition from the current emergency situation to one of long-term planning. The length of the transition depended on the security situation, which was largely unpredictable. The experience and knowledge gained by other countries which had been in similar situations would be drawn upon in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

43. The issue of child survival and development was being examined, as was that of the participation of children to enable them to express their views and to become more responsible adults. The children of Sierra Leone had been unable to enjoy their childhood, and efforts were being made to provide them with new opportunities from a rights-based perspective. Strong emphasis had been placed on both formal and informal education, including the provision of useful skills that would contribute to the country's development.

44. Discrimination against disabled children was not a consciously induced phenomenon. Deaf and dumb children were in most cases obliged to attend special schools, but blind children attended ordinary schools. Unfortunately, they faced problems in relation to reference materials such as textbooks. More could still be done in certain institutions that were small in size or where facilities had been destroyed as a result of the war.

45. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) said that in 1996, when the war had appeared to be at an end, a development plan had been introduced for different sectors. Although disrupted by subsequent conflict, the plan had enabled schools and health centres to be re-established in certain safe areas in the west and south of the country. It was hoped that rebel-occupied areas in the north and east would be reached in time. With regard to the best interests of the child, society in Sierra Leone was based on an extended family system, which meant that children without parents were cared for by other relatives. Owing to that very traditional system, the best interests of children were taken into account in all decisions reached both within the family and at the national level.

46. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee members to ask questions on special protection measures, basic health and welfare and family environment and alternative care.

47. Mr. RABAH said that street children existed in all underdeveloped and developing countries. However, the Sierra Leone report had not provided any statistics on that subject. It was important to ascertain how many children were affected. Was there any plan for the effective provision of alternative care for such children?

48. Mr. FULCI, referring to the question of amputee children, said that in a report to the United Nations Security Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children had referred to many cases of trauma among young children in Sierra Leone. Given the content of the report and similar accounts contained in the press, it was a matter of the utmost urgency for the Government of Sierra Leone to help amputee children. Rehabilitation and the provision of artificial limbs were essential to enable the children to return to school at the earliest possible juncture.

49. Mr. DOEK, reverting to the problems faced by children as a result of the war in Sierra Leone, said that the report contained no indication of any attempt to prosecute those responsible for the atrocities committed. Although there was a clear need to conduct welfare-based activities for amputee children, it was important to recognize that the rights of such children had been seriously violated. That fact must not be forgotten and those responsible should, where appropriate, be prosecuted in a court of law.

50. Turning to special protection measures, he said that greater attention should be focused on the articles of the Convention which referred to problems existing in Sierra Leone, such as sexual exploitation and torture. He wished to know whether the Government had developed a more comprehensive policy to deal with the situation of the children affected. As Mr. Fulci had said, it was necessary to ascertain what the Government had done as a result of the recommendations made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children. In other words, had it rehabilitated amputee children or developed programmes for children who had been physically and sexually abused? Information should likewise be provided regarding the demobilization of child combatants and any activities which had been conducted to re-integrate them into society. Finally, the painful and traumatic legacy of the war could be eased by strengthening such projects as the Voice of Children, whereby radio stations and programmes were used to present children's interests and needs and to increase awareness of their situation.

51. Mrs. RILANTONO said that, although children's survival should be given the highest priority, survival should not be separated from development. She was certain that, after nine years of civil war, many children were suffering from psychosocial trauma, and noted that article 31 of the Convention guaranteed children the right to recreational activities. Recreation, as a form of therapy, could compensate for the trauma experienced. Did the Government have any related programmes? The rebuilding of institutions was a long-term effort, but in the interim playgrounds might be provided to help offset the impact of the war on children.

52. Mrs. MOKHUANE stressed the need for psychosocial reintegration of children affected by the war. Policy-making was a commendable starting point, but it seemed that policies were not always carried through to implementation.

53. Sierra Leone faced a number of challenges. Many children no longer knew what normal life was like; for them war was the norm. Some families were reluctant to take children back because of their psychological scars, and some children were seriously challenging the role of parents. There might even be children who would prefer life to continue under war conditions. She would like to know whether programmes gave prominence to reintegration into families, as she had noted a tendency to establish child-care institutions, which in fact bypassed the real problem. It was important to rebuild trust between adults and children and reintegrate children into their families, which was obviously a long-term venture. What had the Government done to boost its pool of human resources, and how could the Committee assist?

54. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in a personal capacity, asked what steps had been taken in the case of children whose parents had not been located. Had access to inaccessible areas been negotiated, and how were the inhabitants of those areas protected? She would like to know what action had been taken to reintegrate girls who had become pregnant following their stay in rebel camps; were their pregnancies monitored, and were babies born in camps taken care of?

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

55. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone) acknowledged that the number of street children was high. Parents tended to send their children into the streets to beg in order to supplement the in-kind assistance they received in the camps. Schools enabling children to pursue their education existed in camps for internally displaced persons. Organizational assistance was also offered to communities for the same purpose. A street children's programme had been launched in collaboration with the network of child protection agencies and the city council, offering skills training in addition to schooling. A subcommittee emanating from the main child protection committee dealt specifically with issues relating to street children. It designed programmes, monitored the children and offered them general assistance with the aim of reducing their numbers.

56. Children whose families could not be traced came under the responsibility of the Family Tracing and Reunification Programme. Information was collated in a data bank and cooperation took place with child welfare agencies such as UNICEF and the Save the Children Fund and with neighbouring countries. Interim care centres had been set up, especially for former child

soldiers, whom it was extremely difficult to reintegrate into families. It was relatively easy to place children who had never been involved in the war in foster homes; however, while foster families were willing to assist, perhaps because they had lost their own children, they often lacked the means. On the whole the reunification effort had been successful.

57. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), replying to Mr. Fulci's question about amputees, said that the situation was horrifying. In 1998 the Indian Government had sent a team to Sierra Leone to assist with providing prostheses for amputees, but the January 1999 invasion had brought the operation to an abrupt end. Amputees were kept in camps and were fed and cared for by the Government and NGOs until they were physically rehabilitated, at which point they were sent home.

58. No charges had been brought against the perpetrators of atrocities. A Peace Agreement had been signed between the Government and the rebels, and only time would reveal its success. Meanwhile, the Government's priorities were to repair the ravages of the war, rehabilitate people and restore institutions.

59. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone) said that several institutions, including the main child protection committee and the World Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, were collecting data on the situation of sexually abused girls and seeking solutions to the problem. The information gathered was transmitted to the Ministry of Social Welfare and compiled in monthly reports. There was also a subcommittee which designed programmes and questionnaires.

60. Sexual abuse had for years been a taboo subject usually dealt with at the family level. However, since the invasion and reports of schoolgirls being abducted and gang raped, people had become more vocal, a committee had been set up and efforts were being made to sensitize communities and to encourage people to discuss the subject more openly.

61. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone), referring to the demobilization of child soldiers, said that former combatants were taken to special camps where they were disarmed, demobilized and prepared for reintegration into society.

62. Mrs. JUXON-SMITH (Sierra Leone), referring to the use of recreation for trauma healing, said that the Save the Children Fund was spearheading the trauma healing programme. After the 6 January invasion the national stadium had been used as a camp, but efforts were being made to relocate its occupants and to make the stadium available once more for sports. It had been necessary to upgrade the psychosocial manual after the 1999 invasion, and efforts to sensitize the public on health issues and to provide a forum for discussion had intensified. Training had also been offered to teachers and other carers.

63. Much progress had been made in readapting children to society, but experience differed from region to region. In the east and the west, for example, people believed that children had to undergo a cleansing ceremony before readmission into the community. Parents often complied as they did not want to be regarded as condoning their children's wayward behaviour. Once the child was "cleansed" the entire community involved itself in the rehabilitation process.

64. More time was required for the reintegration of children who had fought on the side of the rebels than combatants who had fought to defend their land who had often been involved in an occupation prior to the war to which they could return. The problem of reintegrating former combatants into their families stemmed partly from the fact that the children resisted the authority of their parents, having enjoyed freedom and lack of supervision, and even having been supervisors themselves.

65. Médecins sans Frontières had assisted with training to care for the sexually abused. However, further assistance was needed for training more counsellors. There had always been people willing to help care for children whose parents had not been located, but resources were limited. A list of foster parents was kept and periodic checks carried out to verify that children were in fact attending school.

66. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) said that negotiations had been carried out with the rebels to allow access to formerly inaccessible areas.

67. Mrs. HOWARD (Sierra Leone) said that the situation of pregnant girls returning to school was unprecedented in scope. Some of the girls had 10-year-old children representing the duration of the war. Counselling, medical care and administrative assistance were provided with support from international organizations. UNHCR had provided 100 scholarships and the Freetown City Council provided assistance for the babies. Adolescent mothers received counselling in accepting their children, whom many of them had rejected. It was hoped that funds would be obtained to assist girls who desired skills training, especially as the problem was expected to worsen in future.

68. Mr. BRIMA (Sierra Leone) said that international assistance in that regard would be greatly appreciated.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.